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Twentieth special session of the General Assembly: guidelines for reporting by Governments on the implementation of the Global Programme of Action, on the progress achieved in meeting the goals and targets for the years 2003 and 2008 set out in the Political Declaration adopted by the Assembly at its special session, and on the implementation of the following: Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Drug Crops and on Alternative Development

Follow-up to the Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Crops and on Alternative Development

Report of the Executive Director

I. Background

1. The General Assembly, at its twentieth special session, adopted a Political Declaration,[1] on 10 June 1998, and resolutions on several related matters, including the Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Crops and on Alternative Development.[2] In its resolution 53/115 of 9 December 1998, on international cooperation against the world drug problem, the Assembly requested the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) to report to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs on the follow-up to the Action Plan. The present report has been prepared in response to that request.

II. Follow-up to the Action Plan by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme

2. During September and October 1998, and as a direct follow-up to the Action Plan under review, UNDCP prepared with the Governments of Bolivia, Colombia and Peru three individual business plans for the elimination of illicit drug crops through alternative development. The

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business plans are grounded in the national drug control plans of the respective Governments, and outline strategies to reduce or eliminate drug crops within a specified timeframe. They reflect the commitment of States to implement and enforce the provisions of the international drug control conventions, as well as to give effect to the recommendations contained in the Anti-Drug Strategy in the Hemisphere approved in October 1996 by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States (OAS) (E/CN.7/1997/CRP.12 and Corr.1).

3. The business plan for Bolivia aims at the elimination of illicit crops by the year 2002. The plans for Colombia and Peru aim at the significant reduction of illicit crops during a first phase by 2003, moving towards the goal of elimination by 2008. The plans are consistent with the commitment undertaken by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session to eliminate or significantly reduce the illicit cultivation of coca, cannabis and opium poppy by the year 2008.

4. The aggregate cost of the three business plans is $164 million, which is roughly equivalent to 10 per cent of the estimated aggregate cost of the drug crop reduction and alternative development programmes of the three countries combined. Collectively, the three business plans contain 15 projects calling for economically viable and sustainable investments essential to achieving alternative development objectives and targets for the elimination of drug crops. In line with the Action Plan, the new initiatives will operate within national drug control frameworks that recognize the need, and make financial provision, for law enforcement in controlling illicit crops.

5. The plans make illicit crop farmers the main beneficiaries. The chief aims are to generate agro-industries with proven markets, producing cash and food crops, wood pulp, timber and livestock, and accompanied by the necessary infrastructure development and training to modernize existing producers' associations. The projects attach great importance to effective promotion of competitive business practices in production and marketing and to environmental protection, involving relevant non-governmental organizations wherever feasible. UNDCP support will be delivered in the context of wider developmental initiatives carried out by the Governments concerned, aimed at strengthening community organization, providing social and economic infrastructure, implementing reform of the system of land ownership, developing rural financial systems and supporting farm loans.

6. Incorporating the provisions of the Action Plan, the business plans in South America promote to the greatest practicable extent the following overarching principles:

(a) Long-term financial and political commitment by national and local authorities to sustainable rural development;

(b) National coordination of overall development aid, involving national and international development organizations, as well as international financial institutions, around the common objective of socio-economic development and reduction of rural poverty in illicit crop areas;

(c) Active partnership with local communities in the identification of needs and the design of relevant responses, including systematic promotion of gender methodologies, and active mobilization of the private sector;

(d) Simultaneous support for consistent national enforcement of drug control legislation, protection of human rights and inclusion of activities to reduce demand in and adjacent to illicit crop areas.

7. In October 1998, UNDCP undertook a mission to the region of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to initiate the process of developing a programme framework for international cooperation in drug control in south-east Asia. The UNDCP regional strategy in preparation is governed by the Action Plan and the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, and takes into account the respective national plans and strategies. The strategy for south-east Asia, covering Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, is two-pronged, its aims being: (a) to strengthen, to the extent possible, the drug control capabilities of individual countries; and (b) to address the drug problem in the region through coordinated action by countries with enhanced capacities, using, as far as possible, regional cooperation mechanisms.

8. The programme framework, currently under review by the countries in the region, the ASEAN secretariat and the Asian Development Bank, covers the first five-year period (1999-2003) of the Action Plan, and envisages a 40 per cent reduction in the illicit production of dry opium, provided that the conditions and donor support exists to implement expanded alternative development programmes in the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar.

9. The UNDCP strategy for the region of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) (including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) is also governed by the Action Plan and the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session and is two-pronged, with the same aims as those specified in paragraph 7 above for the countries of south-east Asia. A programme framework for international cooperation on drug control in the ECO countries has been prepared. It provides an efficient and cost-effective framework for UNDCP activities both inside Afghanistan and in neighbouring countries, in conformity with the Action Plan and the Political Declaration. The programme framework covers the first five years (from 1999 to 2003) of the Action Plan, and envisages a 30 per cent reduction in illicit production of dry opium, provided that conditions and donor support exist to implement alternative development initiatives under the common programme in Afghanistan.

10. In line with the Action Plan, initiatives aimed at the elimination of opium poppy in Pakistan and Afghanistan have been implemented and further elaborated. In Pakistan, activities continue to focus on the Dir district in the North-West Frontier Province. UNDCP supports the government enforcement of the poppy ban that was demonstrated in May 1998 by the destruction of 125 hectares out of an estimated 500 hectares under cultivation of opium poppy. Furthermore, UNDCP assists the Government in providing farmers in poppy-growing areas with the means to replace income from opium by growing other crops through alternative development. In addition, UNDCP has embarked upon the preparation of a strategy for the consolidation phase that envisages further assistance through other agencies, once poppy production is eliminated in the Dir district. The objective of complete eradication of opium poppy in 1999 is expected to be achieved.

11. In Afghanistan, UNDCP is implementing a pilot programme (1997-2001) in Nangarhar and Qandahar provinces targeting the elimination of illicit opium cultivation. Development activities have been agreed with beneficiary communities. Furthermore, UNDCP is strongly involved in the common programming process for Afghanistan, which promotes a collective commitment to coordinated action by the assistance community. This provides an opportunity for UNDCP to insert the drug dimension as a shared principle in programmes of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations and in bilateral programmes operating in Afghanistan. As part of a joint strategic monitoring capability to be developed by the Office of the United Nations Coordinator for Humanitarian and Economic Assistance Programmes Relating to Afghanistan, UNDCP plans to establish a monitoring mechanism to assess the impact of international assistance to Afghanistan on the achievement of drug control objectives, the observance of schedules for the elimination of opium poppy and compliance with the policy of conditionality.

12. Particularly as regards the strengthening of international cooperation for alternative development, called for in the Action Plan, UNDCP and Governments have made significant progress in a very short period of time to obtain the support of international financial institutions in programmes aimed at rural development for regions and populations affected by illicit crop cultivation.

13. The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) recently offered invaluable support to the Government of Peru by providing loans for road, energy and related infrastructure works that are essential for effective and sustainable alternative development projects. IDB also convened a consultative group meeting on Peru in support of drug control, held in Brussels in November 1998. The meeting proved highly successful for Peru, and was organized in collaboration with UNDCP, the European Commission and OAS. A similar event, to include the same sponsors as well as Spain and the world Bank, is planned for April 1999 in Paris, on the occasion of the annual World Bank Consultative Group meeting for Bolivia. IDB made provision to assist the Government of Bolivia with essential infrastructure investments. Following consultations with UNDCP, IDB also agreed in principle to providing additional funding for alternative development projects under the business plan for Bolivia.

14. In Colombia, where the resolution of armed conflict and drug control are closely linked, UNDCP, the World Bank, IDB and others are supporting the peace initiative of the Government. The government programme "Investment Funds for Peace", backed by IDB, calls for socio-economic development in several illicit crop regions, thus making them eligible for alternative development. The business plan for Colombia stresses the need for close interaction between alternative development and the peace process.

15. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is currently reviewing the draft programme framework formulated by UNDCP for south-east Asia. Alternative development to establish food security and lawful income-generating activities for opium farmers is an activity that corresponds

closely with ADB rural, agricultural and infrastructural projects at the wider national and subregional levels. Those projects would be the main targets for inserting drug control components in the ADB activities, particularly in the Greater Mekong subregion.

16. Within the context of the new alternative development initiatives emerging as a result of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, UNDCP has been promoting enhanced monitoring, evaluation and information systems. Particular emphasis has been placed on working with Governments to establish efficient and accurate monitoring and verification mechanisms to track the qualitative and quantitative impact over time of alternative development work. Those efforts relate to both the eradication of illicit crops and the sustainability of the licit income opportunities being promoted in areas affected by cultivation. Under the Action Plan, UNDCP will also emphasize monitoring of activities for the eradication of illicit narcotic crops at the global level.

17. Monitoring mechanisms are the indispensable complement of the measures launched to eliminate illicit narcotic crops. They serve two main functions, as described below.

Function 1: assessing the extent of and the trends in illicit cultivation

18. Monitoring activities are meant to provide quality information to Governments and international organizations on the illicit cultivation of cannabis, coca bush and opium poppy at the country, regional and global levels. Such information is needed to assess the progress of the strategies and control measures launched by Governments and international organizations. It will also enable the international community to detect shifts in cultivation and the emergence of new growing areas, known as the "balloon effect". The detection of new cultivation can notably be done by analysing, not only data on illicit cultivation, but also data and information on seizures and demand. Verification surveys can then be launched in suspected new growing areas.

Function 2: guiding the development and implementation of control measures

19. Identifying the areas where control measures are required and the type of interventions suited to the situation, as well as providing continuous feedback on the relevance and impact of the latter, is an essential function of monitoring mechanisms. Monitoring mechanisms thus also become planning instruments for alternative development programmes and eradication measures implemented by Governments and international agencies.

20. Few of the countries where illicit cultivation of narcotic crops takes place have adequate monitoring mechanisms to fully assess the situation prevailing on their territory. As a result, and although estimates have been produced on a regular basis, no comprehensive, reliable and international mechanism for the collection of data on, and the analysis of, illicit narcotic crops is currently available. That is particularly true for cannabis, but also to a large extent for opium poppy and coca. At a time when Governments and the international community are committed to making serious efforts to eliminate illicit cultivation, an adverse situation is created that could limit their capacity to fulfil their commitments, thus jeopardizing the global approach to the elimination of illicit cultivation. Unless something is done to remedy the situation, Member States and the international community will not be in a position either to properly guide and monitor progress in the elimination strategies or to effectively prevent the displacement of cultivation (the balloon effect).

21. There are currently about as many survey methodologies as there are estimates of illicit cultivation. In some countries, estimates are sometimes established without any sound survey activities or in the absence of any consistent methodological guidelines. While the combination of various approaches and sources of information could contribute to obtaining a more accurate and comprehensive picture, a certain consensus on methods of acquiring data is required. Some methods, although rarely systematized, are better known than others, while other methods are still in their infancy. Hence, there is a need for a certain standardization of data acquisition techniques, with a view to establishing reference guidelines for use by Member States and the international community. The following four basic categories of survey techniques can be used, separately or in combination, to provide estimates of and trends in illicit cultivation and to assess the impact of alternative development and control measures: rapid assessment surveys, ground surveys, aerial surveys and satellite surveys.

22. Member States, having decided to intensify data collection activities, asked UNDCP to play an active role in that process. In section IV of the Action Plan, Member States decided that "Governments in the producing areas should design efficient and accurate monitoring and verification mechanisms ... (and) ... should share information on illicit drug crop assessment with the United

Nations International Drug Control Programme and reciprocally with other Governments in order to increase cooperation to eliminate such cultivation."

23. Subsequently, in the proposed revisions to programme 13, international drug control, of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, UNDCP was assigned the responsibility "to establish and maintain a repository of data and information on illicit cultivation, and conduct assessments and analyses to provide Governments an independent, neutral, objective source for measuring the extent, causes and effects of illicit production, as well as the impact of alternative development interventions. To that end, networks to gather information will be established or improved, linking, as appropriate, Governments, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and other international organizations and non-governmental organizations, among others. Technical assistance will be provided, to support States in monitoring illicit cultivation through appropriate survey methodologies" (A/53/6(Prog.13)/Rev.1, subpara. 13.10(a)).

24. On the basis of the decisions adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session and the provisions of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001, the following five guiding principles were thus identified for future UNDCP activities under the medium-term plan:

(a) Monitoring illicit cultivation at the national level is the primary responsibility of the national authorities;

(b) Assessing, analysing and reporting on global illicit cultivation is the primary responsibility of UNDCP;

(c) Forging a link between principles (a) and (b) above is the joint responsibility of Governments, UNDCP and other multilateral institutions. Networks and reporting mechanisms for improving the flow of information will have to be developed or improved, and it will be the responsibility of UNDCP to identify gaps in the network and suggest remedies, including recommendations for the establishment or improvement of national monitoring mechanisms;

(d) The attributes of independence, neutrality and objectivity of the information to be provided by UNDCP to Governments on the global situation can only be secured if the information emanating from the national monitoring mechanisms is verifiable and consistent. Such attributes can be ascertained only if the various national monitoring mechanisms are open, transparent and compatible. Those criteria can be met through the harmonization of survey methodologies, participation in survey activities or the review of survey data by UNDCP and/or Governments or other multilateral institutions. Participation does not necessarily entail technical assistance, although the two can easily be combined;

(e) Technical assistance should be provided to Governments that request it. With its experience and donor support, UNDCP is well positioned to provide such assistance, but other bilateral or multilateral sources of assistance might play a critical role as well, especially for technology-intensive methodologies. Given the costs and technical content of some monitoring instruments, cost-sharing arrangements and joint programmes combining technical and financial contributions from various partners can therefore offer promising approaches.

25. Taking into account the various levels of development of national capabilities, it is expected that Member States and the international community could be in a position to adequately monitor illicit narcotic crops at the national, regional and global levels by the year 2001. The development or strengthening of monitoring mechanisms and networks could proceed as follows:

(a) 1998 (phase I): decisions of the General Assembly at its twentieth special session; formulation of a UNDCP programme development framework; formulation of a UNDCP support project;

(b) 1999 (phase II): development of survey methodologies; design of technical assistance projects for national and regional monitoring mechanisms where needed; design of networks for the exchange of information where needed; establishment of a central UNDCP capacity for data and situation analysis and reporting;

(c) 2000 (phase III): implementation of technical assistance projects; dissemination of survey methodologies; establishment of networks; UNDCP analysis and reporting on the global situation;

(d) 2001 (phase IV): completion of phase III activities; international network of monitoring mechanisms made operational.

26. In November 1998, UNDCP formulated a programme development framework for the monitoring of illicit crops that was shared with Governments and donors. Objectives, guiding principles and the main operational priorities were identified to guide future UNDCP activities. In line with the programme development framework, UNDCP also developed, in December 1998, a one-year support project involving the establishment of a small programme development team and providing for the funding of its activities in 1999 (including the develop-

ment of survey methodologies, participation in country-level needs assessment missions and contributions to the formulation of technical assistance projects and the definition of information-sharing mechanisms).

27. The strengthening of monitoring activities notably requires the development or improvement of the methodology used in surveys and the acquisition and analysis of data. Continuous technological progress has made remote sensing from space, used in combination with other survey techniques, a promising instrument for the monitoring of illicit cultivation of narcotic crops and the planning of alternative development measures in growing areas. Although some experience exists in that respect, methodologies for the use of satellite monitoring need to be further developed. The goal is to put a suitable, state-of-the-art and cost-effective remote-sensing methodology for illicit narcotic crops at the disposal of Member States interested in adding or further developing a satellite remote-sensing capacity in the context of their national monitoring mechanisms. In December 1998, a statement of intent was signed between UNDCP and the European Space Agency (ESA). On that occasion, the main features of a cooperation agreement under which ESA would provide its expertise and technical capacity free of charge to UNDCP for the development of the methodology was discussed. The agreement will be finalized and submitted for approval by the two organizations in early 1999.

28. At the country level, UNDCP signed a new project with the Government of Peru for the further development of its mechanism for the monitoring of illicit crops. UNDCP is also currently providing technical assistance to Afghanistan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar for the same purpose. In addition, similar activities are at an advance planning stage for Albania, Malawi and Morocco.

III. Conclusion

29. The months immediately following the twentieth special session of the General Assembly were used by UNDCP and Governments to incorporate into ongoing and new alternative development activities the provisions of the Action Plan on International Cooperation on the Eradication of Illicit Crops and on Alternative Development. Since the special session, Governments have shown a renewed commitment and willingness to design time-bound strategies for the elimination or significant reduction of illicit crops. Equally important, international financial institutions are beginning to show an unprecedented interest in cooperating with Governments and UNDCP in the development of rural development programmes that also take into account the specific needs of communities affected by illicit crops.

30. Such positive developments are to a significant extent due to the explicit emphasis of the Action Plan on the need for a balanced approach when confronting high levels of illicit cultivation. Over the next two years, it is expected that the implementation of the Action Plan will significantly improve the quality and impact of alternative development interventions, that, in turn, should lead to a much higher level of national and international financial support, which is required to achieve the goal set by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session of eliminating or substantially reducing illicit crops by the year 2008.

Notes

[1] See resolution S-20/2, annex.

[2] Resolution S-20/4 E.